

W.C. HANDY MUSIC FESTIVAL NEWS

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**2006 HANDY POCKET SCHEDULES, MERCHANDISE, TICKETS
FOR PAID EVENTS AVAILABLE AT FESTIVAL HEADQUARTERS**

By Haley Henslee

W.C. Handy Music Festival

FLORENCE, Alabama – Merchandise for the 2006 W.C. Handy Music Festival will include new items featuring this year's design by Muscle Shoals artist Carl Brackin, Jr. as well as old favorites from previous Handy festivals.

This year's festival will take place from Friday, July 21, through Sunday, July 30, with the traditional official opening ceremonies set for 6 p.m. Sunday, July 23, at the W.C. Handy Home and Museum, 620 W. College St., downtown Florence.

New T-shirts will be available for \$15; shirts from past festivals cost \$5 each (or three for \$10); special order T-shirts will cost \$10. Posters for the 2006 festival signed by artist Carl Brackin, Jr., are \$15. Unsigned 2006 posters are \$10. Posters from previous festivals will also be available for \$10.

Other Handy items that will be available for purchase include buttons (\$1), mugs (\$5), tote coolers (\$10), coolers (\$15), blankets (\$20), chairs (\$25), festival CD (\$15) and CD openers (\$2). These items – along with the pocket brochures listing the week's complete 2006 musical lineup – are on sale at the Handy headquarters (located in the annex of the Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts, 217 E. Tuscaloosa St., downtown Florence), and at select events throughout Handy week.

Several sporting events are offered every year during festival week, including the DaDooRunRun Run and Walk and the Three-State Bike Ride. Pre-registration for the run is \$12; on-site registration is \$15. For those who wish to participate in the walk, pre-registration is \$8 and registration on-site is \$10. For families of three or more, registration costs \$10 per person. The registration fee for the Three-State Bike Ride is \$25.

Most of the 200-plus Handy week events are free, but some events hosted during the festival do require an admission charge. The dramatic production *Determined: Celebrating the Life of W.C. Handy* is scheduled for performances on Sunday, July 23, and Monday, July 24, at the Shoals Theatre in downtown Florence. The Deacons of Dixieland will perform at 7 p.m.; the *Determined* play begins at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$7 in advance and \$8 at the door. Tickets are on sale at the Handy office.

An Evening at the Roxy will be held on Thursday, July 27, at the Roxy Theatre in Russellville. Dinner by Swamp John's is an option at this event, which features musical performances by the Deacons of Dixieland and singer and pianist John McAndrew. Dinner will be from 3-6:30 p.m. Eat-in or take out costs \$8. The concert begins at 7 p.m. Admission to the concert is \$5, and tickets are available at the Handy headquarters.

Also on Thursday, July 27, is the Evening at the Ritz with singer Edsel Holden, presented at the Ritz Theatre in Sheffield at 7:30 p.m. This performance features the Legends of Jazz, including Mundell Lowe, Betty Bennett, Holly Hofmann, Mike Wofford, Tim Goodwin, Mike Shepherd and Laszlo Gardony. Admission is \$10, and tickets are on sale at the Handy office.

The two 2006 Handy headliner concerts will take place on Saturday, July 29, at the University of North Alabama's Norton Auditorium in Florence. New Orleans blues-and-jazz pianist Henry Butler will perform at 5 p.m. Rhythm-and-blues and rock 'n' roll singer Bonnie Bramlett, backed by the Capricorn Records Rhythm Section, will hit the stage at 8 p.m. Admission to each concert is \$15 in advance and \$20 at the door. Those wishing to attend both performances may purchase a special \$25 two-headliner concert package.

Some additional Handy Nights and events may have a cover charge. For more information regarding festival events, please visit www.wchandymusicfestival.org or call the Handy Festival Office at (256) 766-7642.